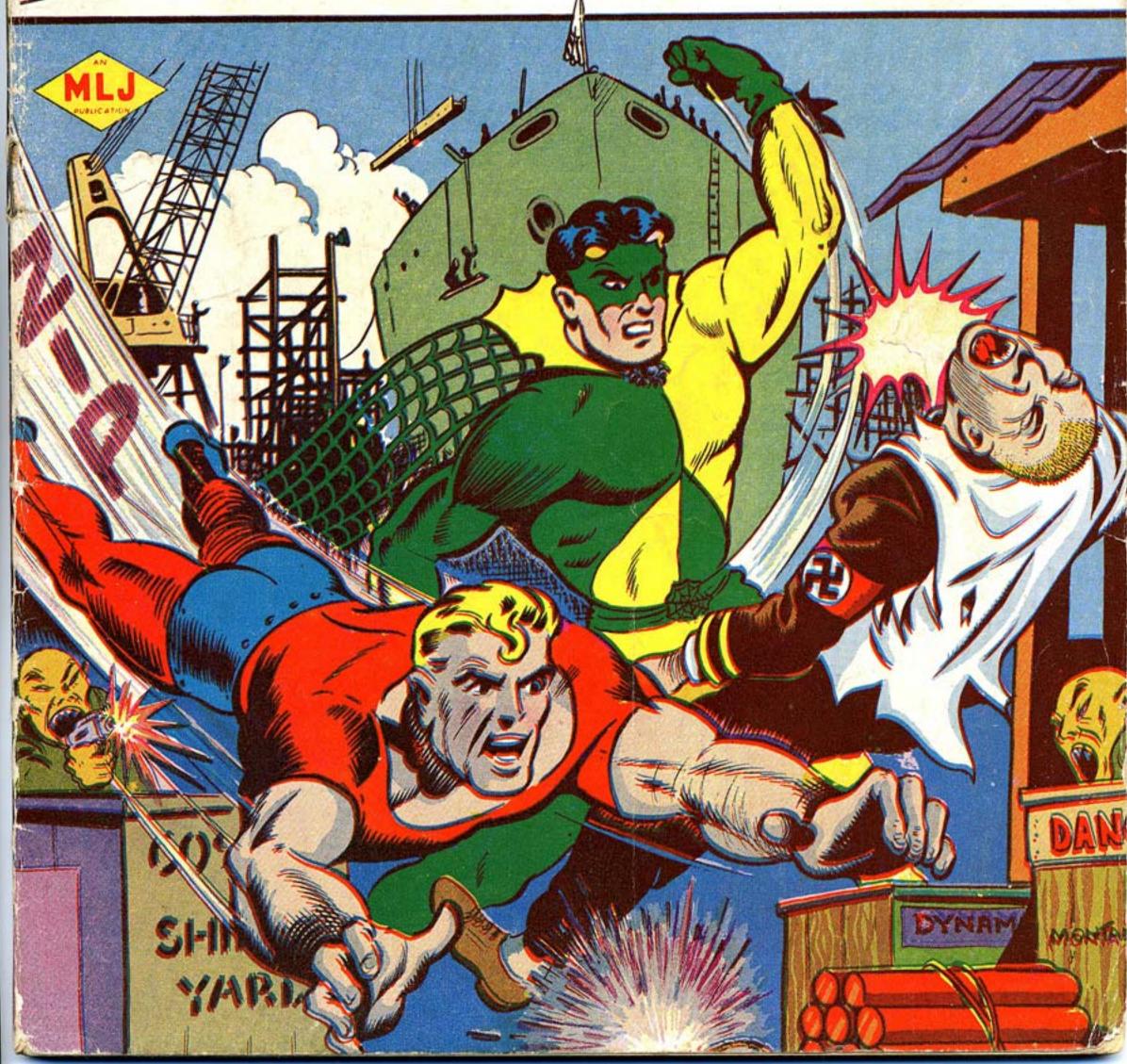
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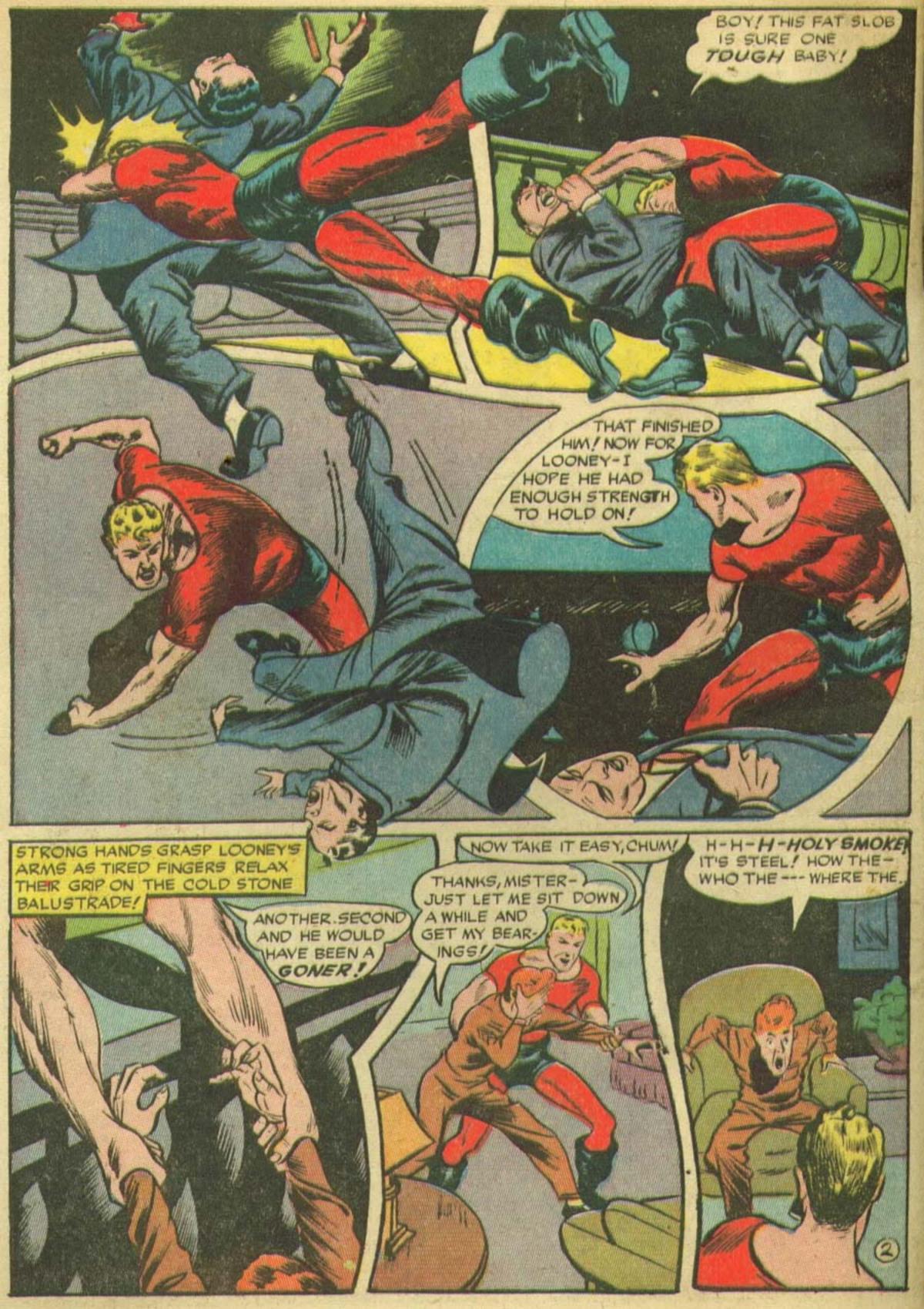
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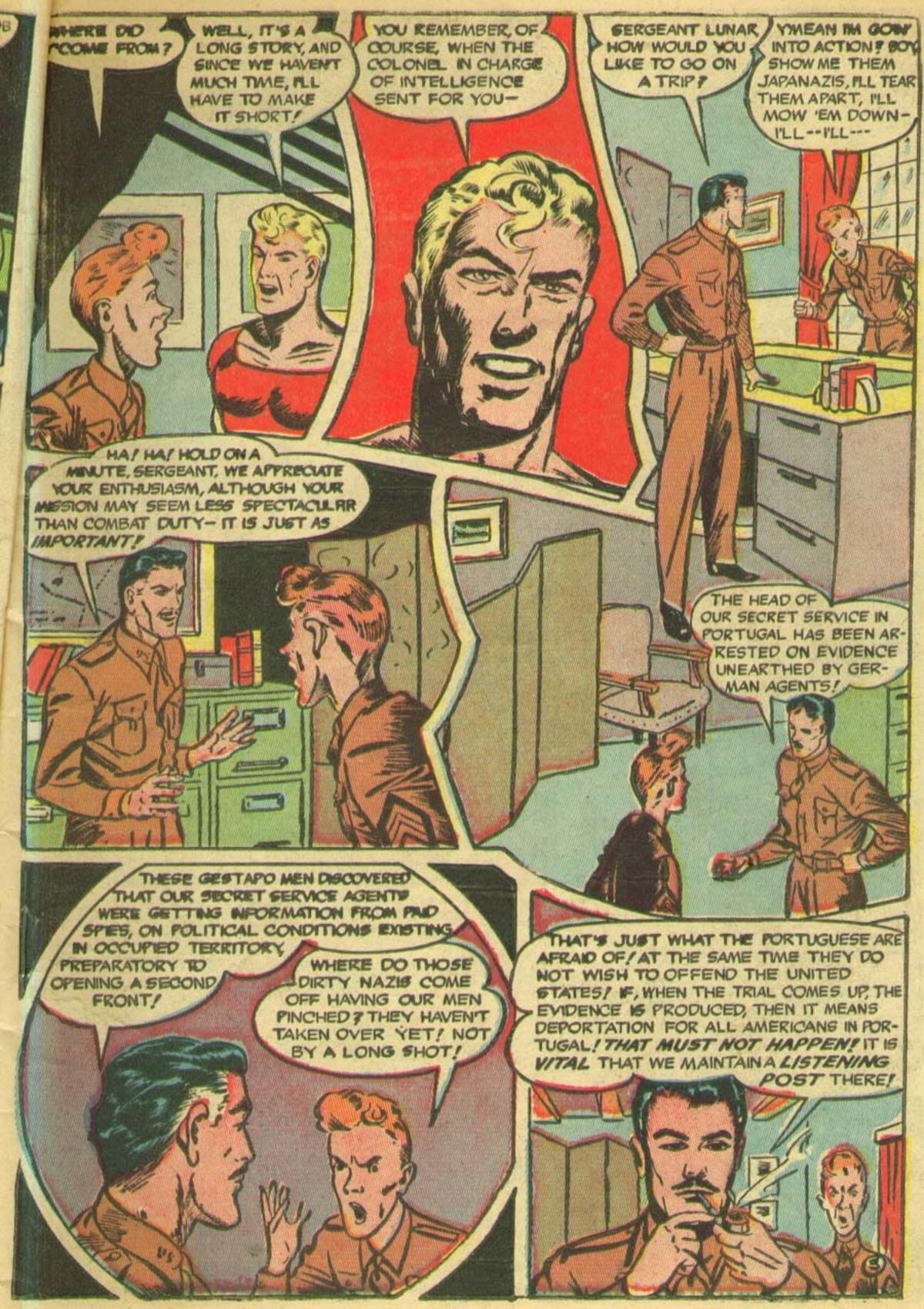


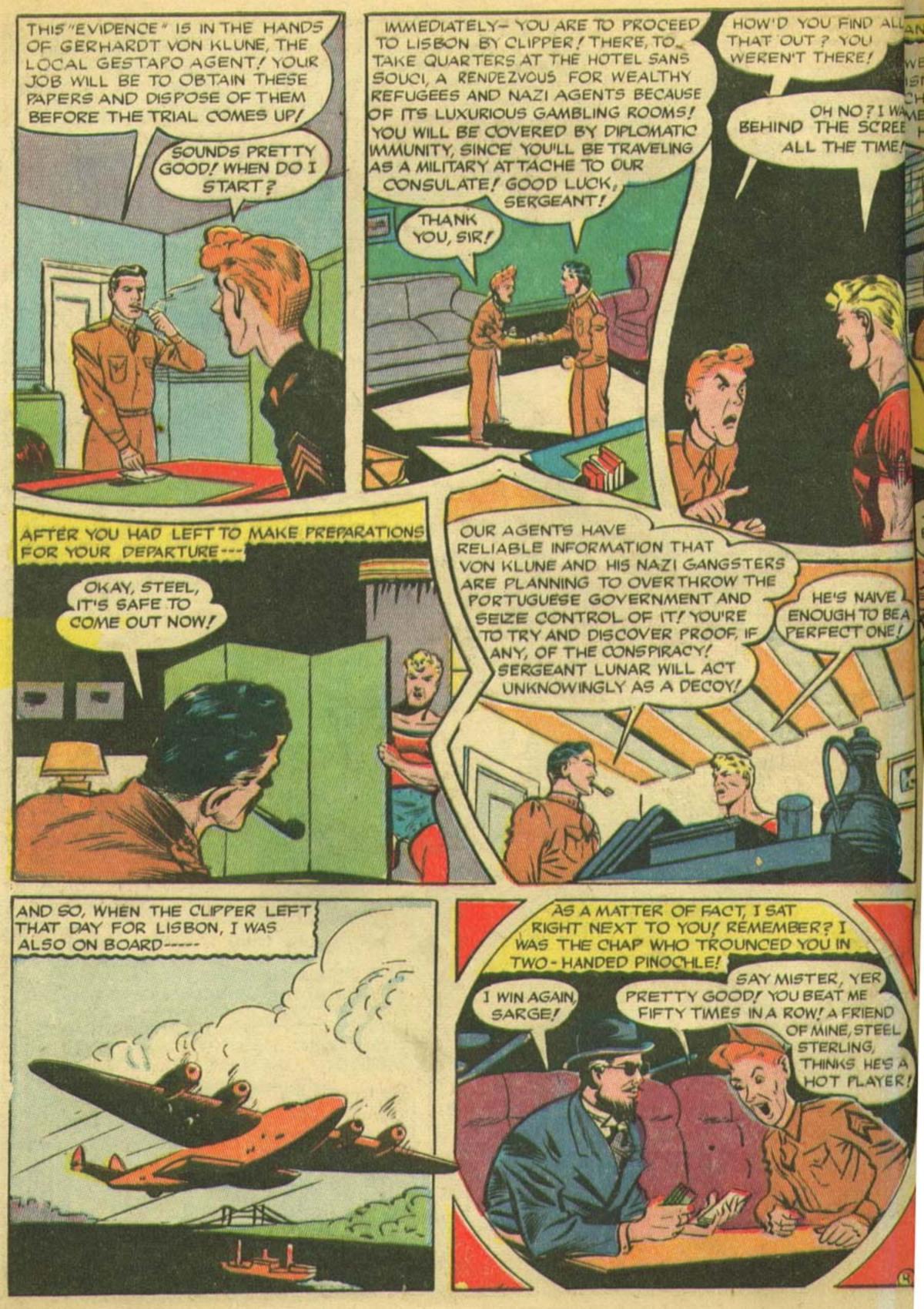
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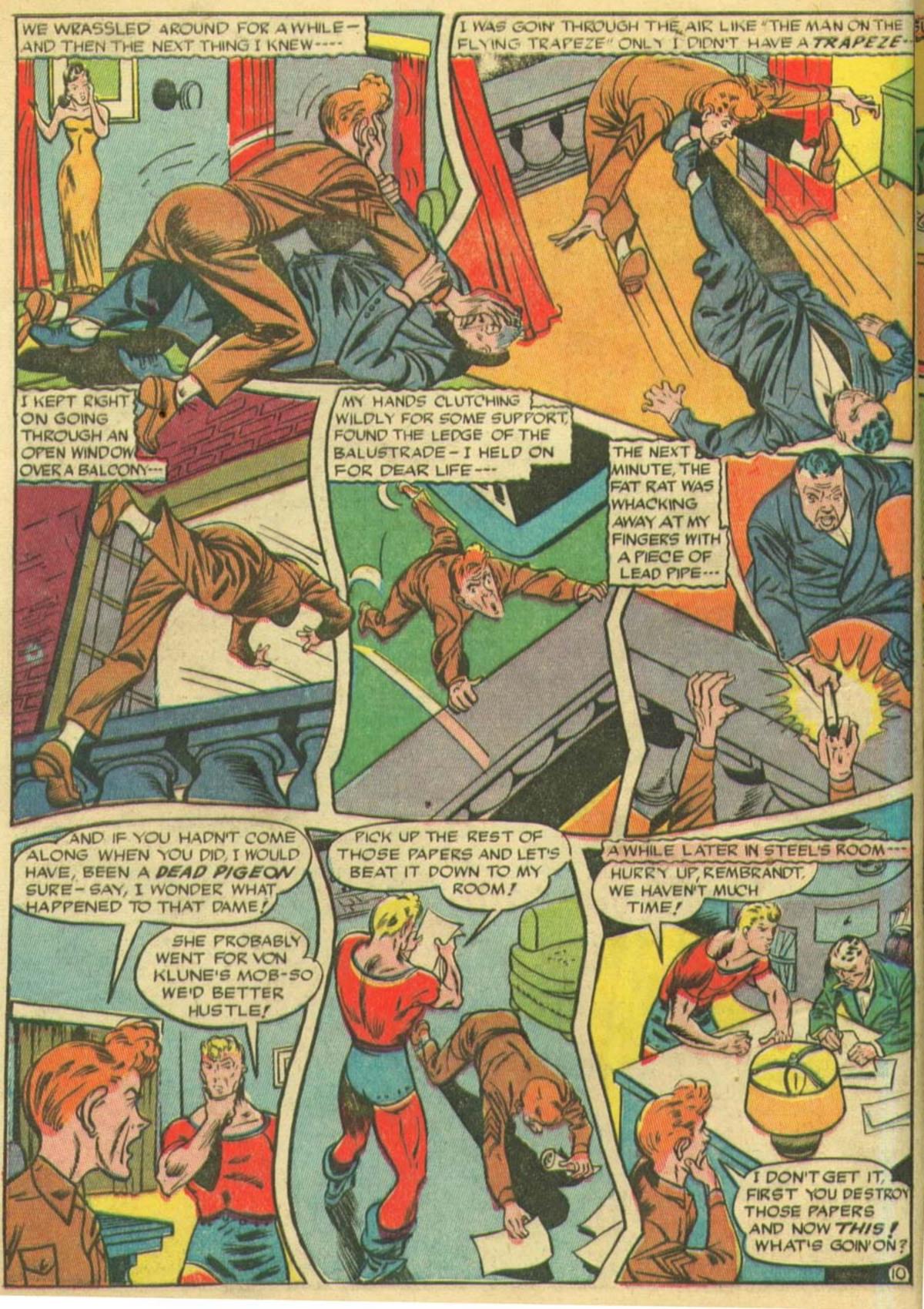


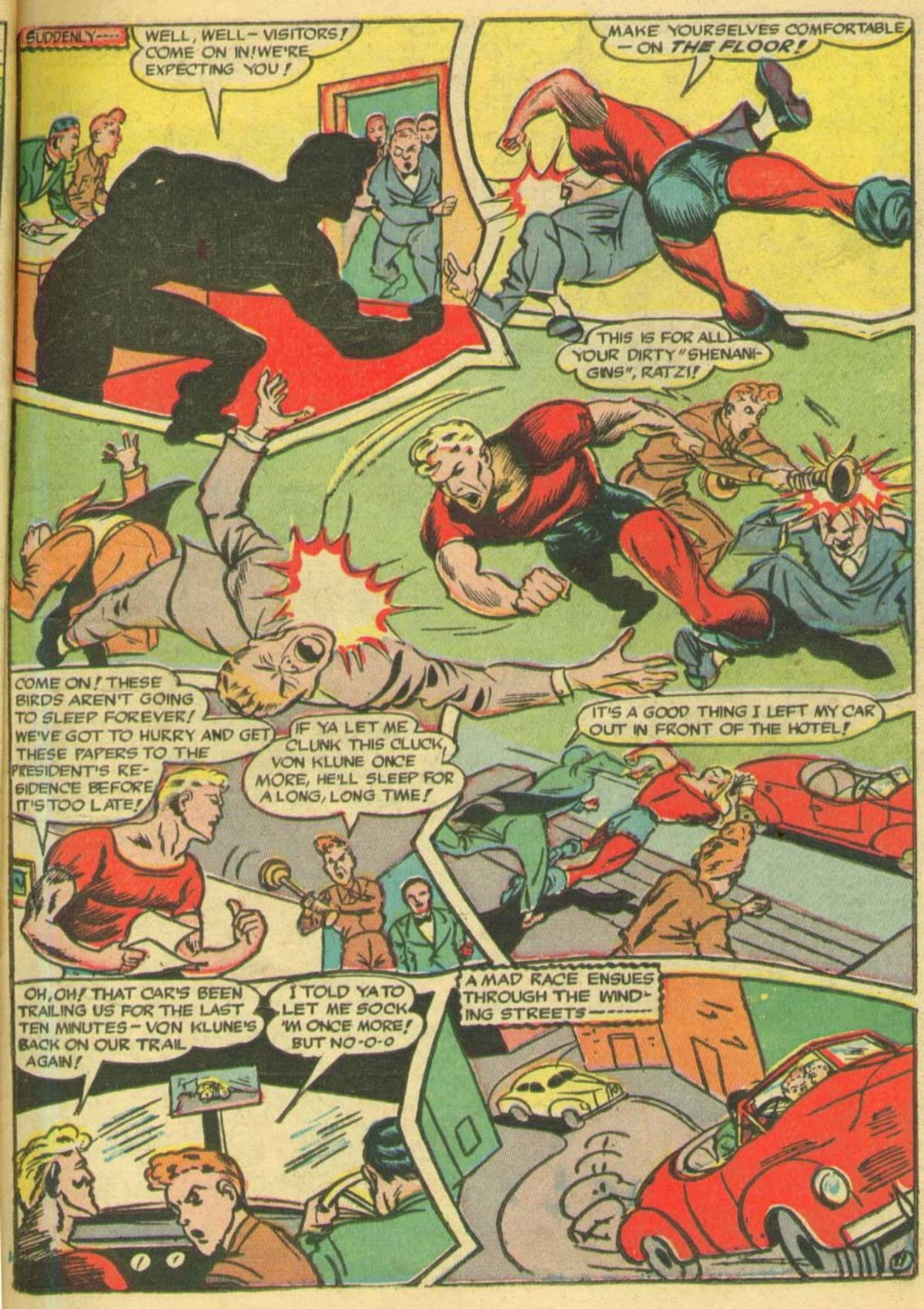






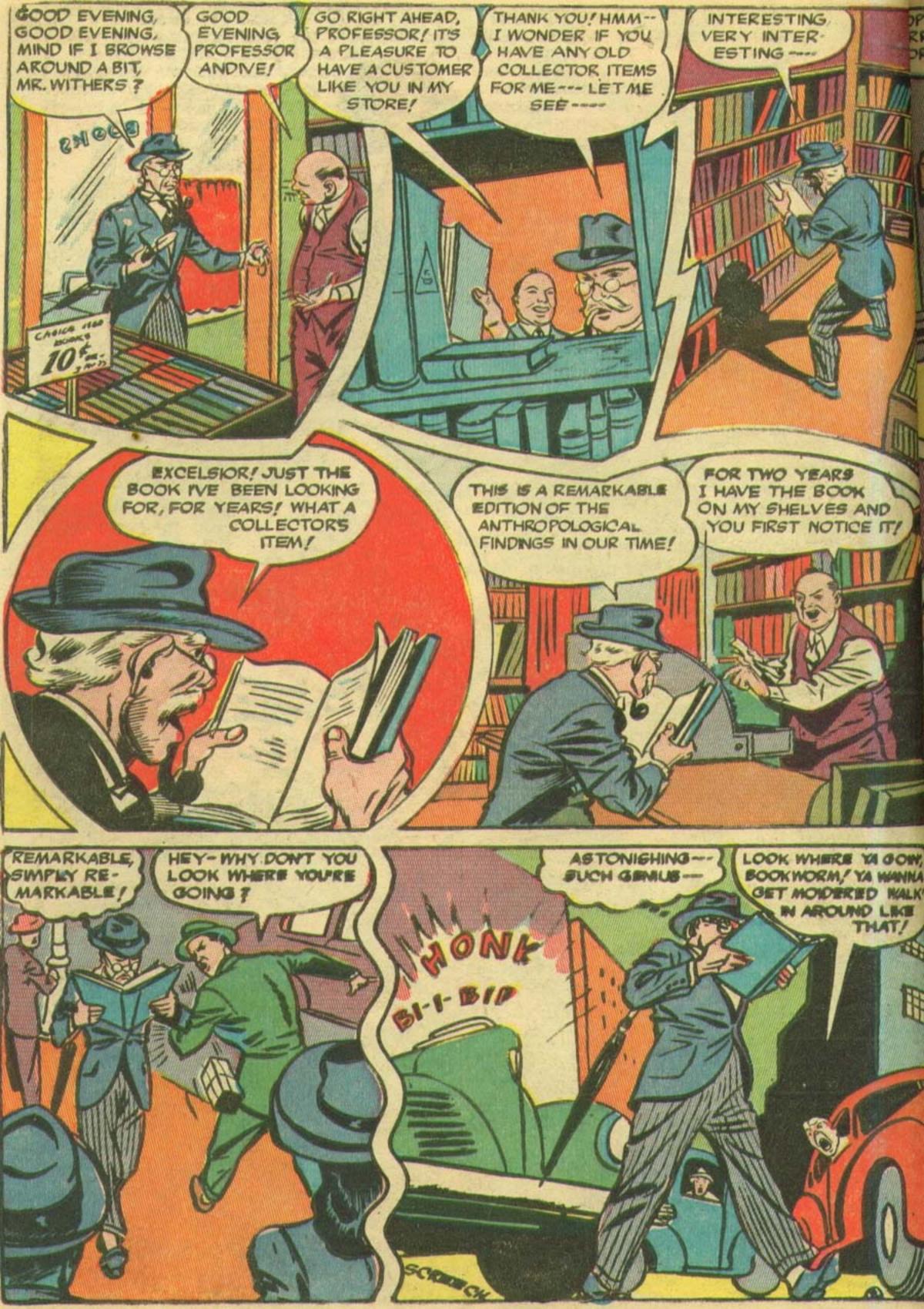












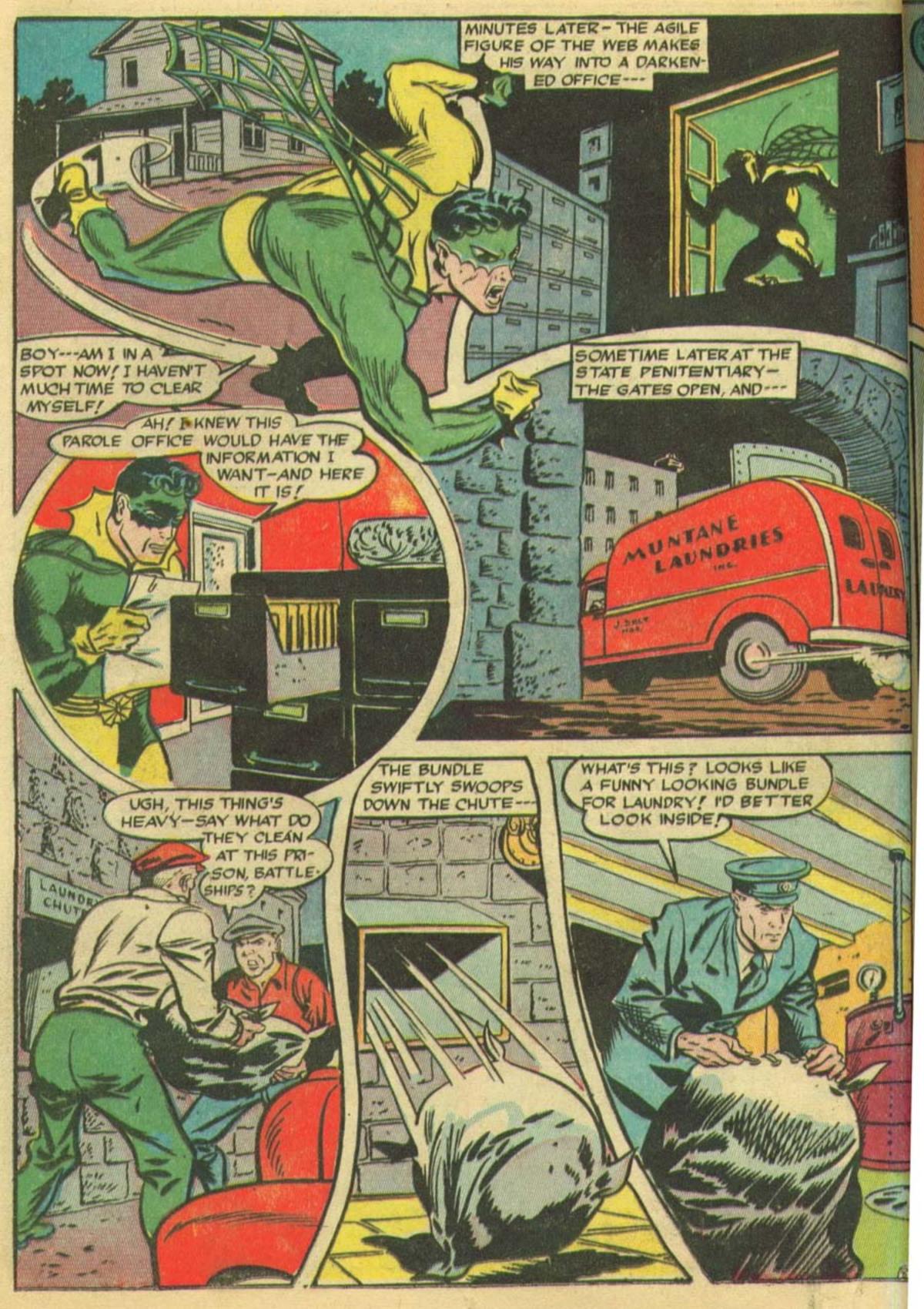






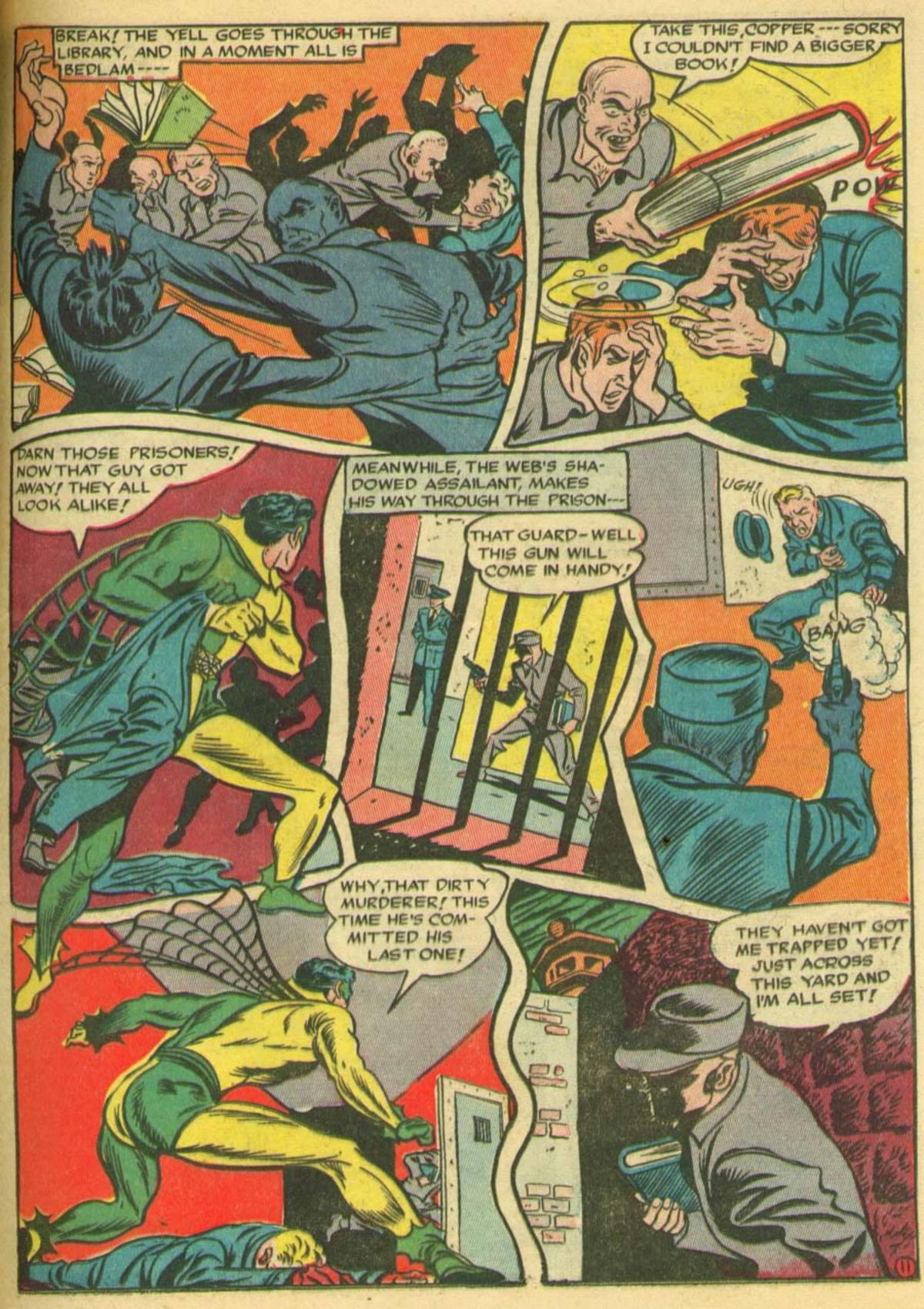


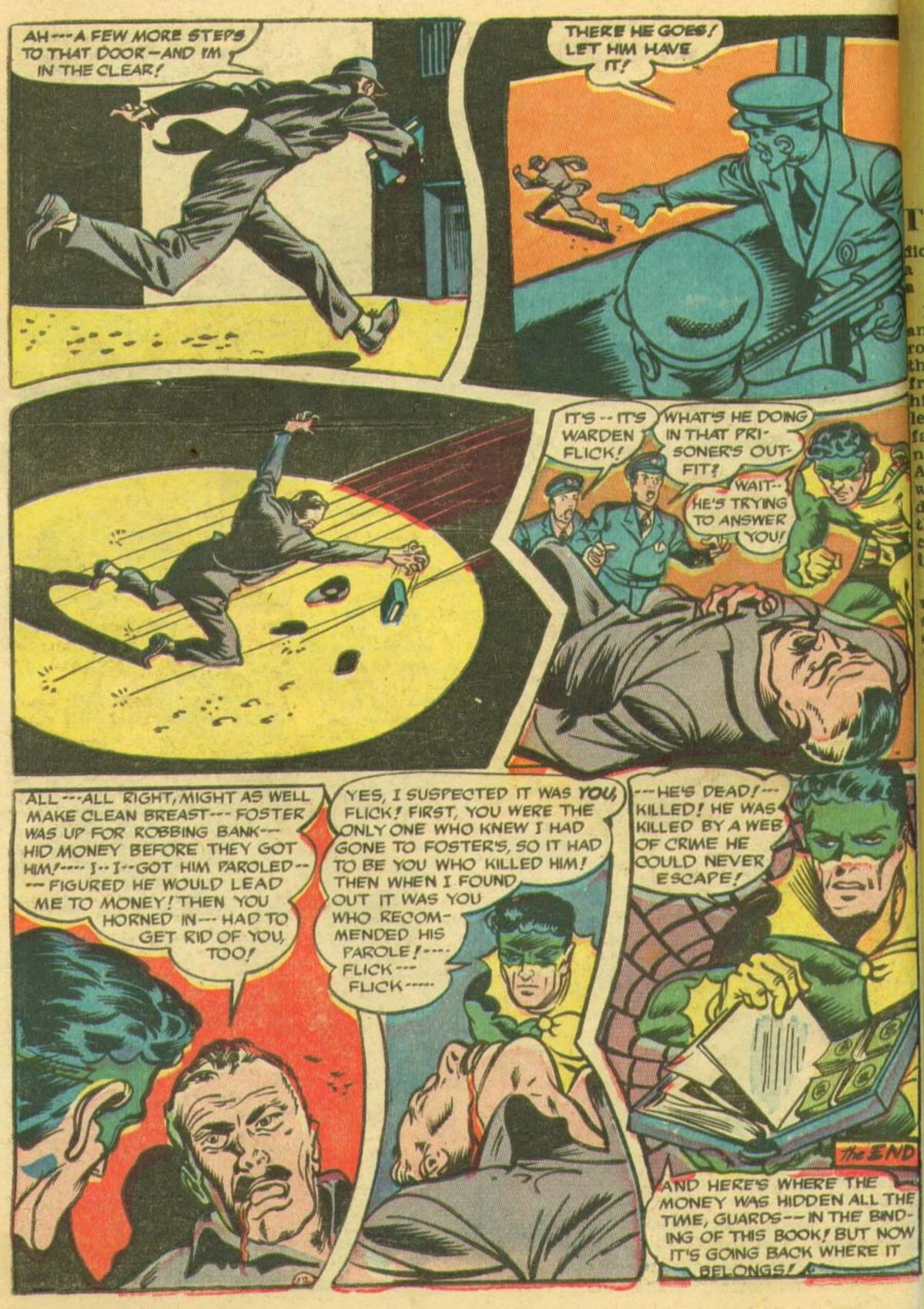












THE PARALYZED THUMB

A WEB STORY

OF PLYNN V. LIVINGSTOP

Dean's shoulder . . . but he didn't cry out. He didn't make a sound. He couldn't. He was a mute. . .

and they came rushing into his room. They saw him lying on the floor with blood gushing from his right shoulder . . . saw him writing awkwardly with his left hand, attempting to tell his family in a note what he couldn't tell them by word of mouth. Across the room was an open window. It was only a five foot drop to an alley downstairs, and the attacker had apparently escaped this way. The gun was lying on the ground downstairs.

Dorothy Dean, Michael's sister, had an idea. She took the note and went to see John Raymond, a criminologist friend. When she returned to the house Raymond was with her

The note was simple.

"Madman attacked me. Came in through window, rushed at me and shot me in shoulder Never saw him before.

When Raymond entered the nouse, the police had already come and gone. Ditto the doctor. Michael Dean's family was clustered around him, acting tender and sympathetic. It was a pretty little family scene, but Raymond's keen eyes fixed themselves briefly on Michael Ray's right hand . . . and he wondered if there might not be more to it than an escaped madman . . .

He stepped up to Michael Dean and examined his right hand. "What's wrong with his thumb?" he asked Dorothy.

The thumb wasn't a pretty eight. It was stiff, paralyzed.

Dorothy stared. "Why-why, I don't know," she said. "I never toticed it before."

Raymond turned to the

said. "You can hear me, can't you?"

Michael Dean nodded his blond head. There were tears deep in his eyes. Dorothy hissed, near Raymonds' ear. "He can hear you. He's mute—but not deaf."

"All right," said Raymond.
"What's wrong with your thumb.
Dean?"

Dean reached for his pad. Stiffly, he scrawled:

"Can't understand it myself
It was all right this morning.
I was using my right hand to
hold my book up till the time
I was attacked, and my thumb
was all right."

Raymond nodded. "I see," no said. "Look, Dean, your note says that you never saw your attacker before. It doesn't seem logical that a man—even s maniac—would come through a window, shoot at you, and jump back out again unless he had something against you—some specific desire to hurt or kill you. Are you positive that you never saw him before? Couldn't you perhaps have forgotten?"

Dean shook his blond head.
"No," he scrawled on the pad,
"definitely no! I wouldn't forget.
I never saw him before in my
life."

"I'll take your word for it,"
Raymond said. "Then how about
other motives. Robbery? Do you
have anything valuable here
that a thief might want to rob?"

contempt flared in Dean's eyes. He lifted the pad. "Don't be a fool. There's nothing here worth robbing. And I tell you this man was insane. He opened the window and saw meand he laughed, a shrill funny kind of laugh, and he came right in and shot me. A thief, seeing me in the house, would have rushed away."

Raymond thought for a moment then shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose you've given the police a description of the maniac," ne saiq. "What did ne look like?"

"He was tall," Dean wrote, "tall and unshaven. Black stubble; heavy black eyebrows. Long black hair, dark eyes. Wearing a dirty brown suit. That's all I saw."

"I guess this is just routine. The police'll pick him up." He walked to the door.

And then at the door, he stopped. "I almost forgot," he said. "Dorothy, will you come over here for a minute?"

She came over.

"There's something I forgot to ask," Raymond said. "Has Michael been mute all his life?"

"Why," said Dorothy, "as a matter of fact, he hasn't. He had a streak of bad luck four years ago, and the failure of his vocal cords came right on the tail end of it."

"Let's hear about this streak of bad luck," Raymond said.

Dorothy's eyes clouded. "First," she said, "Michael's business went bankrupt—and he was left without a cent. Then, suddenly, Michael's wife contracted pneumonia—and she died. And right on top of that, Michael woke one morning and found himself unable to speak and the doctor couldn't do anything about it..."

Raymond nodded thoughtfully. "I see." He drew a deep breath. "Well, Dorothy, sorry I can't be of any help—but the police operate dragnets . . . and they've the facilities to capture the maniac. Any attempts I would make would be amateur stuff."

He waved goodbye to the entire family and left:

And outside, he became The Web. Then, quickly, he set to work.

He knew it wasn't any use doing so, but he checked anyway. He checked with every incane asylum and sanitarium within two hundred miles and learned that no inmate had escaped.

And then he went back to Michael Dean's house. . . .

Dean's family was still gathered around him. They stared as The Web entered the room.

"Dean." The Web said, "listen to me. I've come to help you."

Dean breathed heavily for a moment. Then he lifted his pad and wrote, "I recognize you. How do you mean-help me?"

It was then that Dean noticed that The Web had a small, medical-type bag with him. "Dean," The Web said, "I'm going to restore your voice!"

Again Dean's pencil moved across his pad, and his fingers shook as he did so. "How?"

"I work for the happiness of people." The Web said. "I make mv own law-I don't have to follow medical restrictions . . . like doctors. I'm going to attempt a treatment which doctors would be afraid to try. If you're willing to take the chance. I can restore your voice."

Dean's hands shook. "Anything. I'll take any chance. . . ."

"All right," said The Web. "Lie back in your chair."

Several members of the family protested, but The Web waved them aside. "Boiling waterquickly." He put a white rag over Dean's nostrils and lifted a small bottle from his bag.

"This won't put you to sleep." he said. "It's just going to dull your senses and lessen the pain a bit. Get ready now."

He opened the bottle and poured a few drops onto the rag. Dean's breathing became heavi-

Then The Web lifted a long pointed instrument from his bag. He dipped it momentarily in the hot water, and then, swiftly, plunged it down Dean's throat. Dean's body twitched. The Web jabbed the instrument once, gently, and then withdrew it.

"You're in luck," said The

Web. "I punctured a mucous stoppage which was keeping your vocal cords from operating. Try to talk."

A sound issued from Dean's throat . . . a gargling sound, hideous and horrible. And then Dean shrieked, "I can speak! I can speak. . . ."

The Web smiled. "Look at thumb—the paralyzed your thumb my friend John Raymond described to me."

Dean stared downward. The thumb was normal again. . . .

"That operation I performed was a phony," The Web said. "I'm not a surgeon. I don't know anything about operating . . . "

Dean stared. "But—but I don't understand. Then how . . . "

"Look," said The Web, "I don't know anything about operations-but as a crimefighter I do know a great deal about the mental workings of peopleabout psychiatry. That's how I was able to analyze your case, as soon as Raymond discussed it with me, as anaesthesia."

The Web paused. "Let me tell you a little about anesthesia," he said. "It's a funny mental disease-the strangest known to psychiatrical science, perhaps. And only one person can cure it—the patient himself.

"It appears, generally, just after a man or woman has just had a series of mental shocks and bad breaks—when that man or woman is beginning to feel terribly sorry for himself or herself. It's kind of mental pleading for sympathy—a begging for people to help the patient be miserable . . . "

"I don't understand," Dean said again. "Are you trying to tell me . . .

"Let me finish my explanation," said The Web. "At any rate, when a man has this mental desire for sympathy-something subconscious and strange happens. He becomes paralyzed. Sometimes it's an arm-sometimes it's a leg-and sometimes, Dean, it's the vocal cords. The victim becomes paralyzed-as

definitely paralyzed as if it w a true physical paralysis. W there have been cases when patient pushed lighted di rettes against his leg-and h hypnotized himself so thorous ly into believing that the was paralyzed that he did even feel pain.

"That's what happened w you, Michael. You just carri it further than some other You've sat around for four year seeking sympathy—and your f mily was getting a little us to you by now. So you fake this whole business—actual faked a shooting so that you family's sympathy for you cou be renewed. And again you hypnosis worked on yourse Your thumb became paralyzed

The Web walked to the do "There's a treatment for and thesiatic patients," he sail "Your doctor must be a gener practitioner with a gullible min and no knowledge whatsoever of mental ailments . . . other wise he would have used the treatment on you long ago. Ju as the patient has hypnotize himself into thinking he's para lyzed . . . so must the psychia trist hypnotize him into think ing he's been cured. I droppe some ordinary water on a piece of rag over your nostrils . . dipped the surgical instrument into boiling water-just to give you the illusion of an operation. Then I simply touched your throat with the instrument —and the momentary pain, plu my talk about attempting a treatment doctors would be afraid to try, hypnotized you into thinking you'd been cured Naturally your 'paralyzed' thumi -which had become that way during your new surge of desire for pity when you pulled that phony shooting-became normal in a hurry."

He opened the door. "Get wise to yourself, Dean," he said "Stop feeling sorry for yourself -and go out and get a job."

Then he slammed the door behind him and went out into the night.

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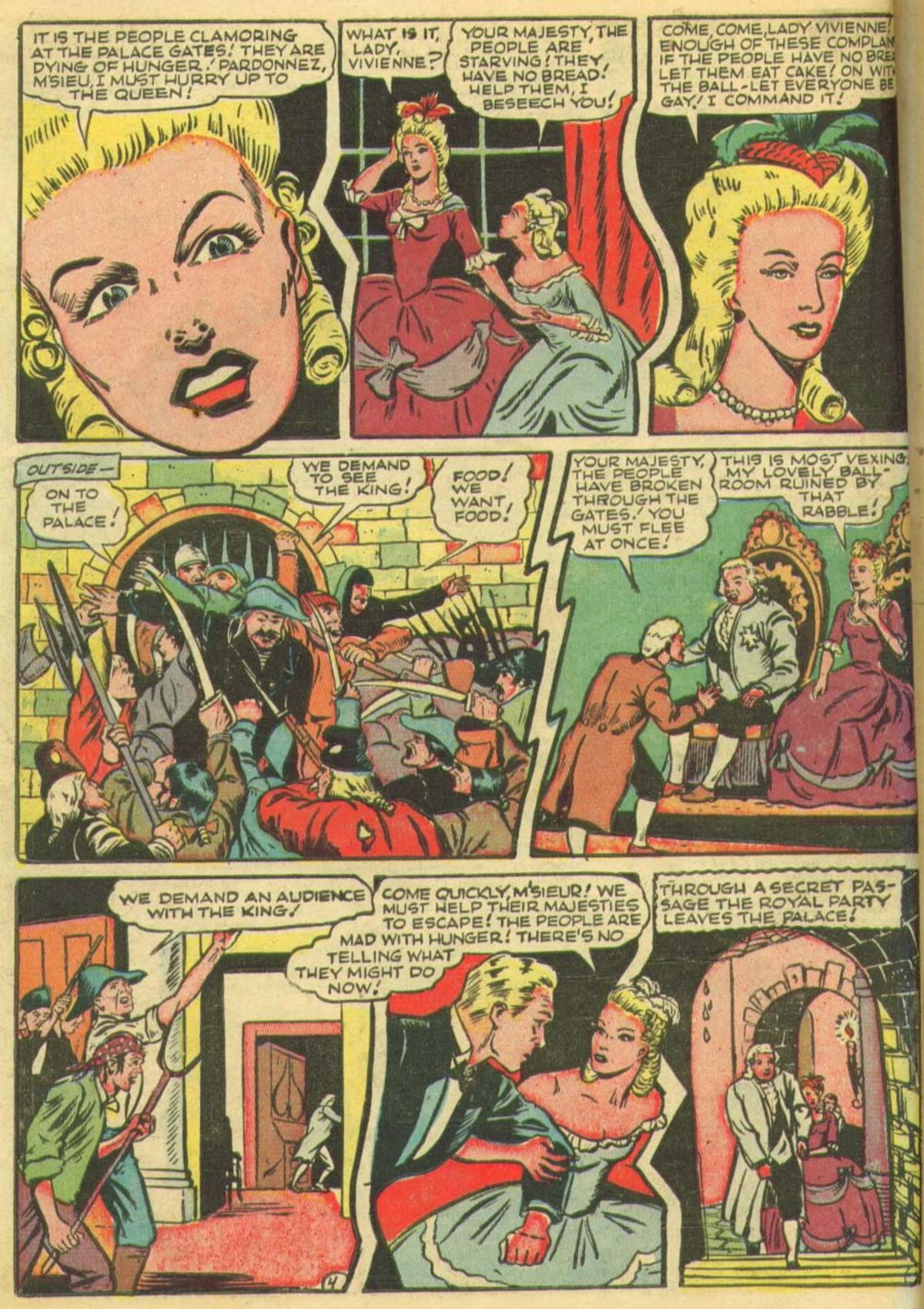
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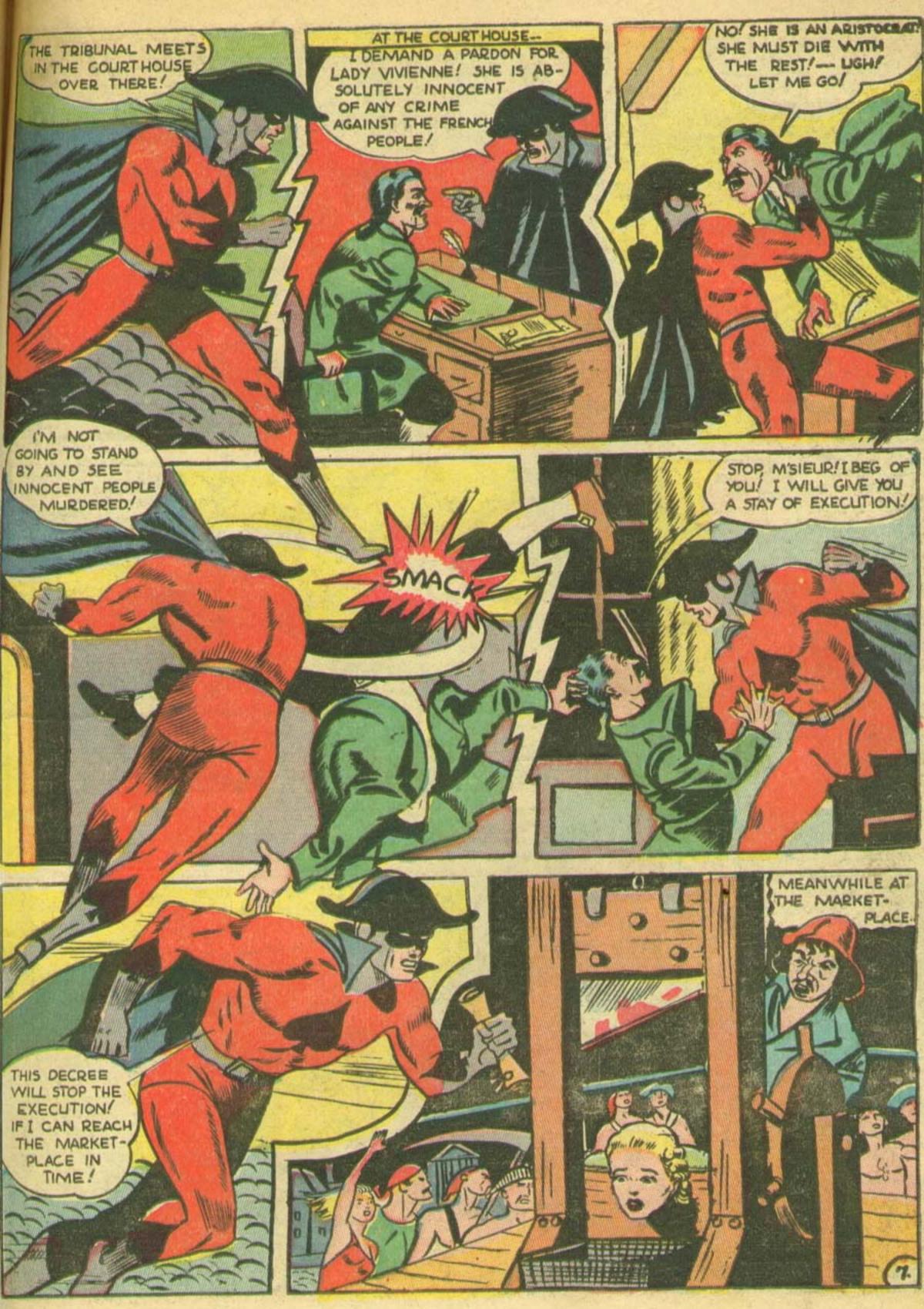














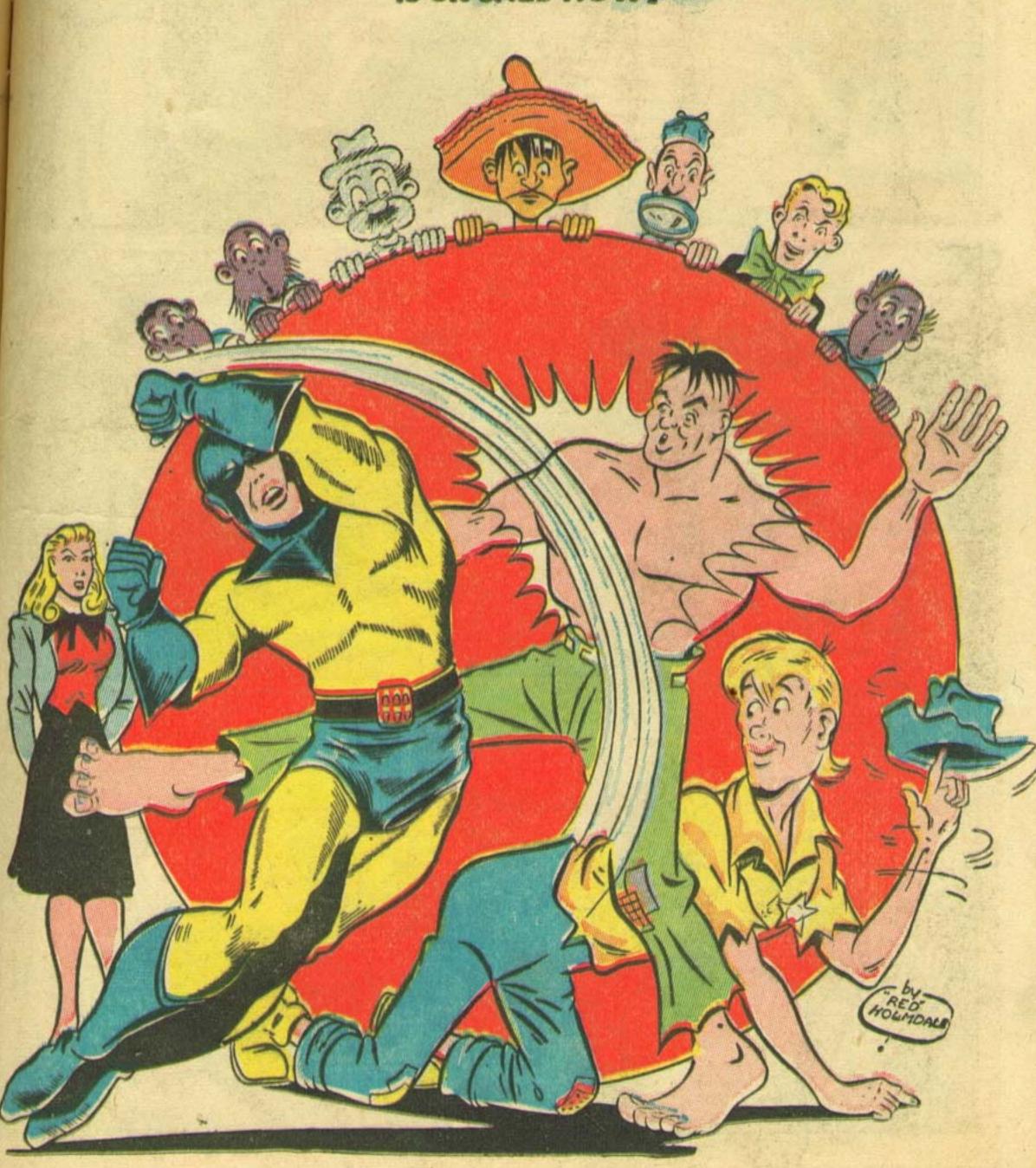






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ARE THE SMILES TOP NOTCH LAUGHS BRINGS
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I'M SORRY, FOLKS,

TERRIBLE NEWS!

BUT I JUST HAD

WHAT!

THAT

OLD BAT









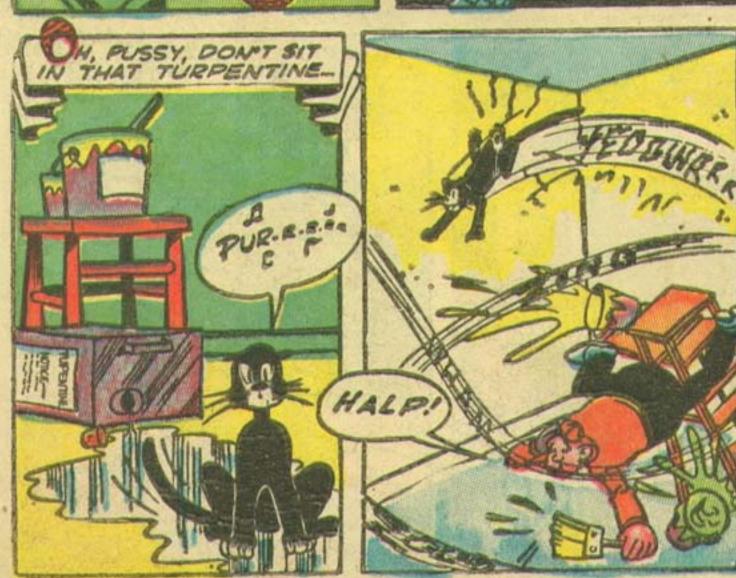






























































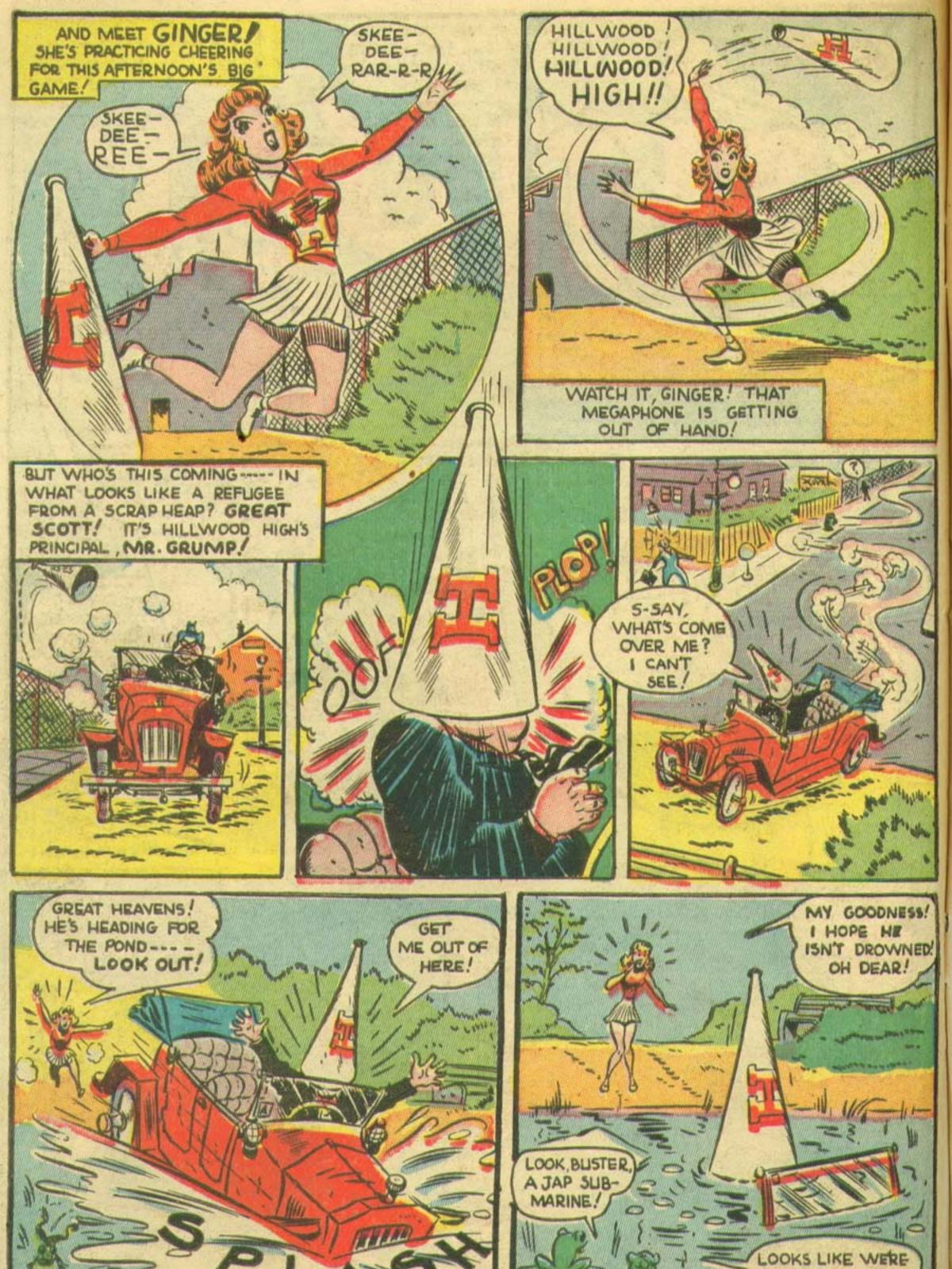












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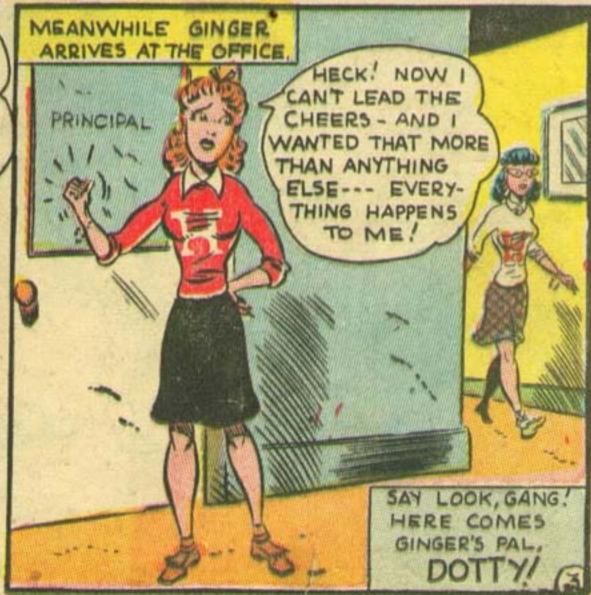






















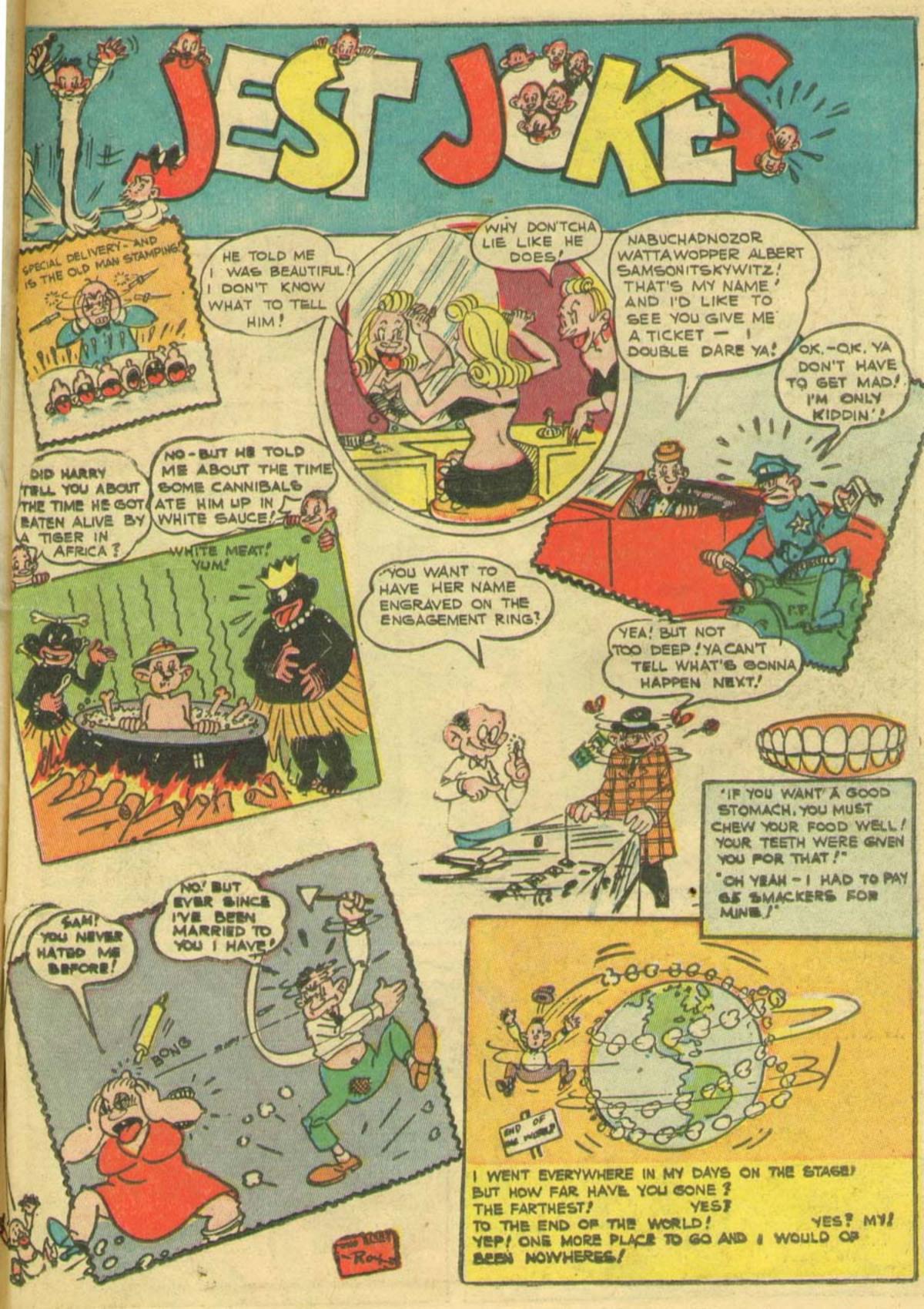










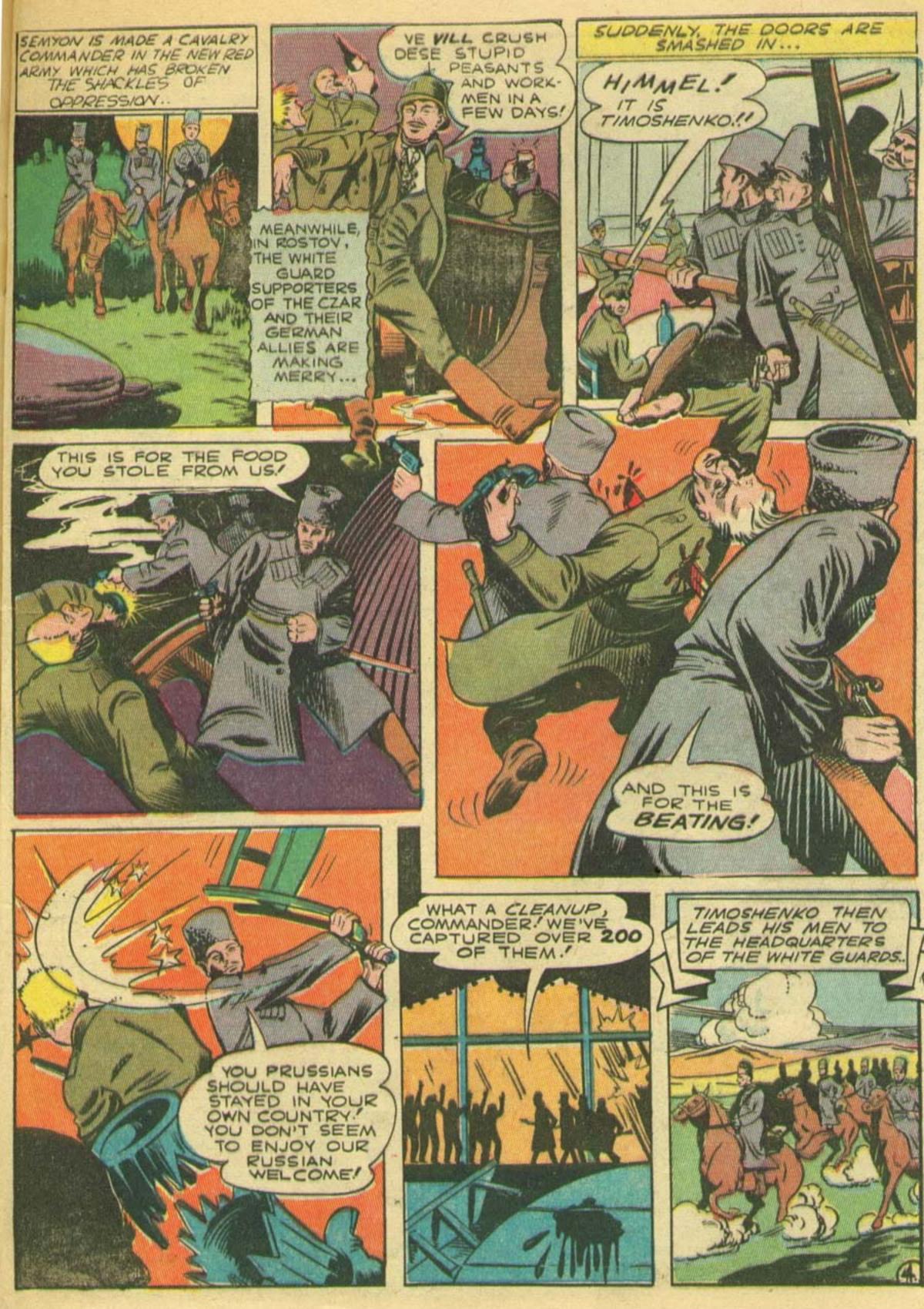


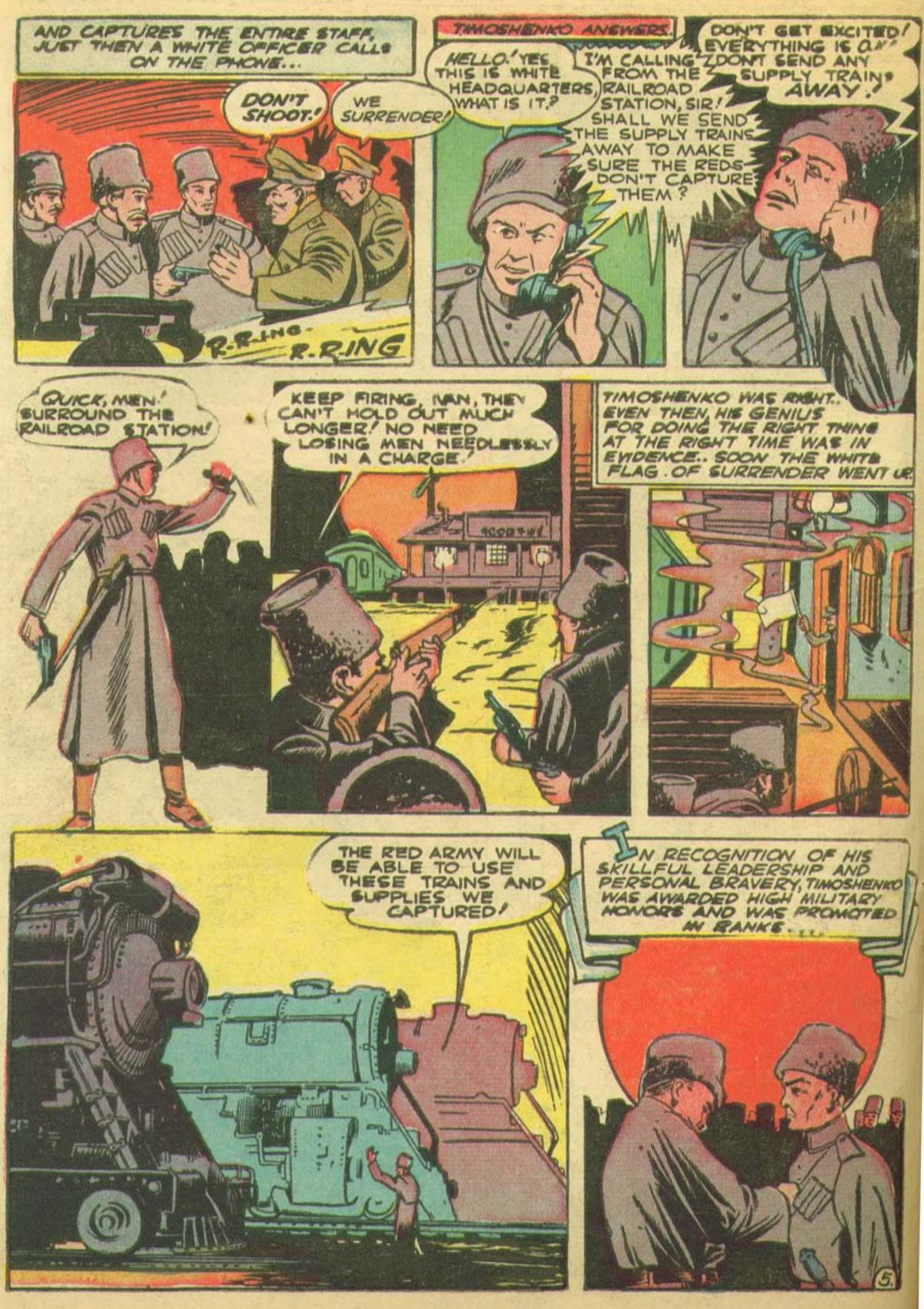












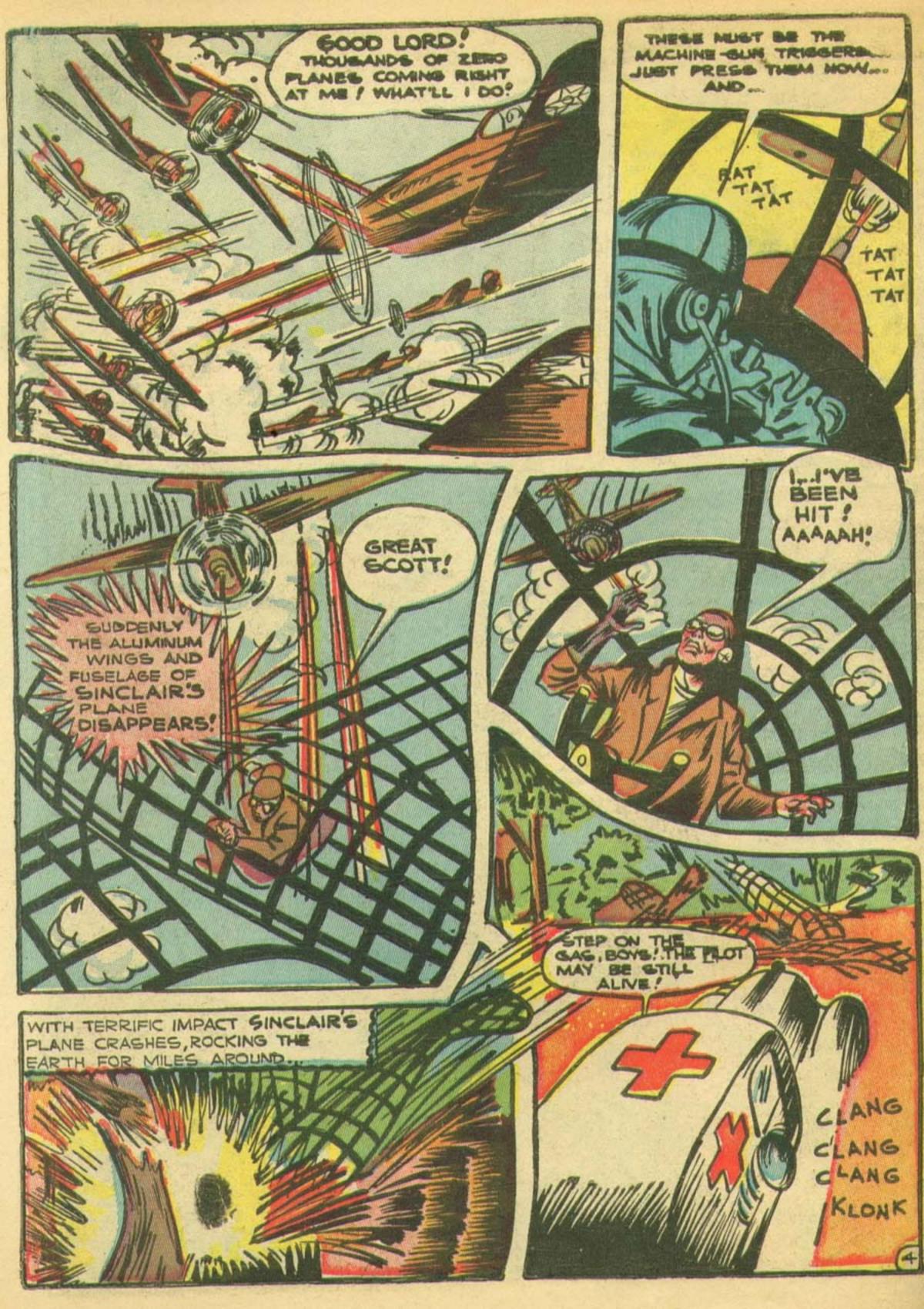


















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